

Message Text

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TAGS: PINT, IT SPOP

SUBJ: ABORTION REFORM APPROACHING CLIMAX

REF: ROME 18933

1. SUMMARY. REFTEL EXPLAINED CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING COMPROMISE ABORTION MEASURE WORKED OUT BY PCI AND DC IN DECEMBER. DRAFT BILL WAS APPROVED BY CHAMBER COMMITTEE BEFORE CHRISTMAS AND WAS TO HAVE BEEN DEBATED BY FULL CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES IN MID-JANUARY UNTIL GOVERNMENT CRISIS IMPINGED. WITH EXISTENCE OF NEW GOVERNMENT--ASSUMING UNEVENTFUL VOTE OF CONFIDENCE IN BOTH HOUSES BY EARLY WEEK OF FEBRUARY 23--ALL PARTIES WILL NOW HAVE TO FACE THE ABORTION HOT POTATO AS ONE OF THE FIRST ORDERS OF BUSINESS. DIFFICULT CHOICES FACED BY THE MAJOR PARTIES ARE DESCRIBED BELOW. END SUMMARY.

2. IN DECEMBER IT APPEARED THAT THE PCI HAD--AS IS BECOMING TYPICAL--DISCOVERED WHAT WOULD APPEAR TO THE ITALIAN PUBLIC AS THE SANE AND RESPONSIBLE MIDDLE COURSE BETWEEN OBDURATE INACTION BY THE DC AND LIBERTARIAN RHETORIC FROM THE PSI. IT NOW APPEARS THAT PRESSURES FROM BELOW WHEN COMBINED WITH CHANGING POWER BALANCE PERCEPTIONS FLOWING FROM THE CRISIS NOW MAKE THE ABORTION REFORM QUESTION A DIFFICULT AND DIVISIVE ISSUE FOR EACH OF THE MAIN ACTORS: THE DC (AND THE CHURCH), THE PSI (INCLUDING THEIR FEMINIST AND RADICAL SUPPORTERS) AND THE PCI.

3. THE ALTERNATIVES ARE CLEAR. EITHER THE PRESENT LAW IS
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NULLIFIED THROUGH THE PASSAGE OF A NEW STATUTE OR A POTENTIALLY

DEVISIVE REFERENDUM IS HELD BEFORE JUNE 15. THE ONLY OTHER WAY OF REALISTICALLY AVOIDING A REFERENDUM THIS YEAR WOULD BE FOR THE PARLIAMENT TO BE DISSOLVED AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS HELD BEFORE JUNE 15, WHICH WOULD POSTPONE THE MATTER FOR ONE YEAR. THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS FOR ANY OF THE ACTORS.

4. THE BALANCE SHEET AS SEEN BY EACH PARTY:

THE DC: GROUPS ON BOTH THE RIGHT AND LEFT OF THE PARTY ARE RUMORED TO FAVOR "HARD OPPOSITION" TO ANY CHANGE IN THE COMPROMISE BILL APPROVED BY COMMITTEE IN DECEMBER. THE RIGHT HARDLINERS (E.G. SEALFARO) APPARENTLY SEE A CLASH WITH THE LIBERTARIAN ON THIS ISSUE TO BE AS GOOD A FIGHT TO MAKE AS ANY; MORE INTERESTING IS THE DILEMMA OF THE ZACCAGNINI-MOROTEI LEFT OF CENTER FORCES WHO HAVE BEEN ESPOUSING AN ALMOST BIBLICAL LINE. THEY FIND GRAVE DIFFICULTY WITH ANY AVOIDANCE OF WHAT FOR THEM IS A CLEAR MORAL CHALLENGE. SOME OF THEM EVEN HAVE TROUBLE WITH THE PENDING DRAFT BILL. ON THE OTHER HAND THEY CLEARLY SEE ALL THE POLITICAL DANGERS INHERENT IN POLEMICAL OPPOSITION TO THE LAY PARTIES. COMMUNIONE AND LIBERAZIONE PERCEIVES THE SAME CLEAR MORAL CHALLENGE BUT THEY APPARENTLY LOOK FORWARD TO THE FIGHT WITH MORE RELISH. THE BROAD CENTER OF THE PARTY WOULD FAVOR ALLOWING PRESENT BILL TO PASS AND MIGHT AGREE TO "SOFT" OPPOSITION (VIA CALCULATED ABSENCE OF ENOUGH DC DEPUTIES TO ELIMINATE ANTI-ABORTION MSI-DC MAJORITY) TO ALLOW BILL TO PASS AND ELIMINATE THRUST OF A BITTER REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN. BUT ONE DOUBTS WHETHER MANY IN THE CENTER COULD ACCEPT UNMASKED "ABORTION ON DEMAND" LEGISLATION OR SUPPORT ANY LEGISLATION SO VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED BY CHURCH. ONE PROBLEM SEEN BY THIS GROUP AND BY MODERATE DC FEMINISTS--A SMALL FLOCK JUST NOW TRYING ITS WINGS--IS THAT THE PRESENT FASCIST STATUTE PROHIBITS ALL ABORTION IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN "THE SPECIES." THEY DREAD POSSIBILITY OF UNDERTAKING CAMPAIGN TO SAVE THIS LEGISLATION IN WHICH THEIR ONLY ALLIES WOULD BE MSI. SOME OF THIS GROUP WOULD PREFER FOR THE REFERENDUM TO BE HELD, FOR THE DC TO REMAIN NEUTRAL, AND FOR THE REFERENDUM TO BE CARRIED. THEN WHENEVER A NEW LAW WAS DISCUSSED THEY WOULD BE IN A POSITION TO OPPOSE ANYTHING THAT VIOLATED "RIGHT TO LIFE" CONCEPT WITHOUT BEING ISOLATED WITH THE MSI. UNFORTUNATELY, FOR THEM, THE ONLY WAY THEY CAN HAVE A REFERENDUM IS IF THEY MANAGE TO BLOCK LAY PARTIES PUSH FOR A NEW LAW. TO ACCOMPLISH THIS THEY WOULD

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HAVE TO MAKE COMMON CAUSE WITH MSI WHILE DEALING SUB-ROSA WITH THE PCI AT THE SAME TIME. THEN THEY WOULD HAVE TO AVOID PRESSURES FROM THE CHURCH TO TAKE A CLEAR STAND DURING A REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN. IN SUM AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK.

THE PSI: THEY WERE GREATLY DISTRESSED BY THE COMPROMISE WORKED OUT BY THE DC AND PCI IN DECEMBER. IN FACT IT WAS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN THEIR PROVOKING THE GOVERNMENT CRISIS WHEN THEY DID. IN PRINCIPLE THEY AGREE WITH RADICAL PARTY/

FEMINIST GROUPS THAT WOMEN SHOULD HAVE SOLE RIGHT TO DETERMINE WHAT HAPPENS TO THEIR BODIES. IDEALLY THEY WOULD LIKE TO SCRAP ANY MANDATORY INTERVENING COUNSELOR OR DECISION-MAKER, SUCH AS THE MD'S ROLE IN THE PCI COMPROMISE. THE HEAT THEY FELT FOR PROVOKING THE CRISIS AND THEIR BELATED PERCEPTION THAT THE PCI RATHER THAN THE PSI MIGHT BENEFIT ELECTORALLY FROM EARLY ELECTIONS OR FROM FURTHER DETERIORATION IN NATIONAL MORALE MAY LEAD THEM TO ACCEPT COMPROMISE SOLUTION.

PCI: EVIDENTLY THE NATIONAL LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT CHASTENED BY COMPLAINTS FROM GROUPS OF NORTHERN INDUSTRIAL FEMALE FACTORY WORKERS THAT THEIR RIGHTS WERE BEING SOLD OUT TO APPEASE THE DC AND THE CHURCH. RECENT NATIONAL COMMUNIST WOMENS CONFERENCE (FIRST SINCE 1970) MIGHT HAVE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT THIS WAS ONE AREA WHERE IN TERMS OF BOTH MEMBERS AND ENERGY PSI WAS IN FACT LEADING THE LEFT. AT THE CONFERENCE DISCUSSION OF ABORTION WAS REPORTEDLY LED BY A SOCIALIST. IN ADDITION IT MAY BE THAT IMPORTANT SEGMENTS OF THE PCI BASED ON RECENT PERFORMANCE OF DC AND SCANDALS NOW FEAR AND RESPECT THE RESIDUAL POWER OF THE DC AND ITS SUPPORTERS LESS REPEAT LESS. THEY MAY THEREFORE BE READY TO MOVE CLOSER TO THE PSI POSITION ON ABORTION.

5. POSSIBILITIES: WE HAVE HEARD THAT THE PCI AND PSI ARE CREATING A SMALL DRAFTING COMMISSION TO WORK OUT COMPROMISE ON AMENDMENTS TO THE LEGISLATION. IT IS REPORTED THAT THE ROLE OF THE MEDIATING PHYSICIAN WILL BE REDUCED TO A MINIMUM. THE ONE WEEK WAITING PERIOD BETWEEN SEEING PHYSICIAN AND RECEIVING "DECISION" WILL BE ELIMINATED; THE WOMAN WILL NOT HAVE TO CERTIFY WHICH OF THREE PERMITTED CAUSES PERTAINS FOR REQUESTING AN ABORTION (HEALTH, ECONOMIC OR SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL) AND THE PHYSICIAN WILL ONLY BE ABLE TO OBJECT ON HEALTH GROUNDS. THIS FORMULA WOULD GIVE FEMINISTS MOST OF WHAT THEY SEEK WHILE AT THE SAME TIME MAINTAINING SOME ROLE FOR A RESPONSIBLE REPRESENTA-
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TIVE OF SOCIETY AS IS DESIRED BY THE PCI. THE QUESTION IS WHETHER IT LEAVES A SUFFICIENTLY LARGE FIG LEAF FOR THE DC TO ALLOW ENOUGH OF ITS LEGISLATORS TO BE "ABSENT" FROM THE HALL DURING THE VOTE.

6. THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE: NEXT WEEK THE PARTIES MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO BEGIN PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE PENDING BILL OR TO GO INTO RECESS "FOR PARTY CONGRESSES" AFTER DEALING WITH EMERGENCY ECONOMIC MEASURES. IF THEY CHOSE RECESS THEY WILL NOT BE ABLE TO GET BACK TO ABORTION UNTIL LATE MARCH AT SOONEST. ASSUMING PRESIDENT SETS REFERENDUM FOR SUNDAY, JUNE 13, OFFICIAL "PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN" (THE POLEMICS) WOULD BEGIN ON MAY 13. THEREFORE, FOR REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN TO BE AVOIDED, THE PARTIES WOULD HAVE AT MOST SIX WEEKS TO PASS ONE OF THE MOST CONTROVERSIAL PIECES OF LEGISLATION IN ITALIAN HISTORY. VOLPE

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